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“PRIMITIVE SIMPLICITY.”

IN the course of a conversation with one of the condemned Chicago anarchists, a gentleman who was induced by sympathy to visit their prison is said to have related the following little story :

VISITOR : “ An uncle of mine had a good-sized farm once, with a considerable amount of waste land attached. Being a kindly old man, and widely known throughout the country, he was constantly subjected to all sorts of demands on his charity. One day a party of tramps came along, who asked for shelter, and, after taking as many into his house as it would hold, he stowed the rest away in his barn.”

ANARCHIST : “ Ant charget 'em nuthin' for their lotgins ?”

VISITOR : “ No, not a cent, and moreover he fed them with the best that he had.”

ANARCHIST : (Shrewdly) “ I guess it vasn't long before some more of their frents came smellin' along that same road, vas it ?”

VISITOR : “ It was not ; a fresh batch, strangely enough, arrived the very next day. As all the buildings were full, however, the old man told them they might go down to the waste land and build themselves shanties, and he would feed them all as well as he could.”

ANARCHIST : “ Mein Got, he was a ferry remarkable man. After that I guess he couldn't keep dem off mit a club.”

VISITOR : “ He could scarcely have done so had he tried, for they continued to arrive in greater numbers every day. Because the best land, however, soon got taken up, and the sugar for the coffee would no longer go round, the last comers got very angry. They swore at the old man and abused him frightfully. They even proceeded to smash the windows in his house, and, not satisfied with that, they tried to burn down his barns, and would attack his hired men whenever they could catch them alone about the place.”

ANARCHIST : “ They vas a mean, dirty pack. If I had been dot old man I'd haf fired them all out.”

VISITOR : “ That is just what the old man was at last compelled to do.”

ANARCHIST : “ Goot ! But vot koint of peoples vos these, anyhow ?”

VISITOR : “ Well, I don't wish to be personal, but it is supposed they were friends of *yours*.”

ANARCHIST (Confusedly) : “ Got in Himmel, frents of mine ! But hold on, vot did you say the name of dot uncle of yours vas ?”

VISITOR : “ I didn't say, but down in the country where he lives he usually goes by the name of ‘ Uncle Sam. ’”

The doctrines of the Anarchist would seem scarcely worthy of notice were it not that they are gradually superseding all other

forms of Communism, and are attracting, by their radical nature, large numbers of even educated people in Europe. These are the tenets of the Nihilist, and for this faith pure women, talented men, and even children mount the gallows in Russia, or willingly suffer exile to the frozen steppes of Siberia. The Russian, the Bohemian, and the Pole come to these shores, if not permeated, at least tainted with the poison of Nihilism, and we have seen the terrible effects of these teachings amongst the unfortunate seven with whom this little sketch opens.

Has the madness of these people any counterpart in history, or is it a rank growth special to our day? Amongst early Christians, and indeed in all primitive religions, we find the idea of a rejuvenation through destruction held as an article of faith :

Dies iræ, dies illa,
Solvat sæculum in favilla.

“The idea of palingenesis,” says Laveleye, “arose from the problem of evil. The just suffer, the wicked triumph. The belief that the world, fundamentally bad, must perish in flames in order to make way for a new heaven, is found in all religions.” “In Mazdeism, the successive cycles of the development of humanity on earth end in a general conflagration, followed by a universal renewal.” “In the Wolospa of the Eddas, the palingenesis is conceived almost exactly as in our Gospels;” while in the deluge of Noah we find the same belief, though the purification is through another element.

“The revolutionists of our time,” continues Laveleye, speaking of the anarchists, “reproduce the same train of reasoning.” The only difference is that our Nihilists, for the most part denying the existence of a Deity, have to take the matter of destruction into their own hands.

Nevertheless, Anarchism has an intermediate stage in internationalism, and to understand the former we must take a glance at the last. Internationalism seems to owe its birth to trades unionism, and got its first start, if not its name, from the International Exhibition of London in 1862, while Poland, Italy, France, Germany, and England, we are told, raised the munificent sum of three pounds sterling to carry along the movement. By gradual stages Marx’s theories of a laxity of federal ties came to mean a “collectivity” of the human family, like the *Hauscom-*

munionen, or groups of family communities in Servia and Croatia, where bands of men and women are seen working together in the fields to the music of the *guzla*. Surely a most charming picture, though what “the *guzla*” may mean I can only trust to my imagination.

Briefly, the aim and ultimate object of internationalism was to draw all nations into one vast trades union, but that the seeds of disruption were sown from the very start is shown by Hepworth Dixon in his secret “History of the Internationale,” where he well describes the differences on the subject of nationality that sprang up.

“I want,” says the Frenchman, “to lay down true principles and to found a society in which eternal justice shall reign.” “As for me,” replies the Englishman, with stolid obtuseness, “I care only for better wages and the nine-hour bill.”

“What a sorry beast is this John Bull,” mutters the Frenchman,” raising his hands with a gesture of acute despair. “No ideas, no syntheses, no imagination. He will never light the torch and lead the world. *Sacre Dieu!*”

Now the transition of Internationalism into Nihilism is just here. The Nihilists, seeing the utter absurdity of having one state manage the conflicting interests of the world, thought to improve matters by having no management. Internationalism would have one state for all, the Anarchist would have no state for any, and if you look into it closely you will see that the last follows naturally from the first. For how could one government serve all the countries of the world, even as to the question of the location of its capital? There would have to be a head centre somewhere, and which capital city should have this privilege? A capital fixed immutably in England might cause jealousy to America, and if New Guinea agreed to enter any such federation it would probably be only on the terms that the seat of empire should occasionally be within her domains. Would Ireland, having at last gained her Parliament, suffer the seat of empire to be again transferred to London, or would France submit to having it in Berlin? Oh, says Marx, there would be government but no seat. This is equivalent to saying that the government would be on its legs; and most likely, in order not to give offense, it would have to make good use of its legs in its earnest efforts to suit all countries, all climates, all

religions, by timely visits. One great principle would be illustrated by such a government at all events ; namely, the principle of perpetual motion. It would indeed bear a striking resemblance to the government of one of the South American Republics, to which I have heard my uncle, the late John L. Stephens, was accredited as Minister. After three years of energetic pursuit he could never catch up with that government, and was obliged to return with his credentials in his pocket.

But, says the Internationalist, again ready to meet this new difficulty, the government I propose would be an amorphous one, made up of amorphous or formless communes ; that is, a government having no arms, no seat, and no legs. If it has no legs this certainly settles the question about its rapid progress. But it seems to me that a government without a seat, without arms, and without legs, would have a pretty hard time of it in enforcing its decrees, and would be only too likely to suffer the disrespectful treatment an india rubber humpty-dumpty meets that is kicked over the floor by the playful child.

Let me quote a few extracts from the pen of Jules Nos-tag, if only to show that the *reductio ad absurdum* is the best way to treat such absurdities : “ Fatherland,” says he, “ is a phrase, a folly, that has only served for penning up human cattle in inclosures, where they may be shorn and bled.” “ Nations are brothers.” “ Nations, countries, are no longer more than words.” “ Nationality, the result of birth, is an evil.”

Or let us look into the frenzied utterances of some of our own Anarchists. “ The stars and stripes are only fit for prison suits for officials, much better the red flag of universal brotherhood.” “ Presidents are but unvarnished kings who keep alive the curse of nationality.” “ Open your eyes,” “ down with despots,” “ away with tyrants.” Can there be any greater display of insanity than this ? So far from national boundaries being a curse they have produced the very qualities we hold most dear in humanity. Rivalry between nations has been the spur that has urged all nations forward and has placed them to-day above where they were one thousand years ago. Would America be as great but for her former rivalry with England ? Our victories first inspired us with a feeling of self-reliance, and on self-reliance our prosperity has been built. Would Germany, without France as a rival, be as great as she is ? Without emulation mankind goes backward ;

and so far from being pens for their people's slaughter, boundary lines of nations are the hedges of their sanctity, the bulwarks of their traditions, and inspire as they protect their art, their literature, their science, and their song.

Is there an American that does not take pride in his country? Is there any one so besotted as not to recognize what practical results have been attained by this very pride? To show the world what we could do, has made us what we are, and the plow, the printing press, and the steam engine have been more than the sword the instruments of our advance. Arbitration daily tends to fix the sword the firmer in the scabbard; but the same old emulation remains, nerving our horses on foreign race tracks to no less honorable efforts than in following the bugle call, and causing the mastership of the ocean to be contended for by *pleasure* boats instead of being bled and battled for by grim old Ironsides of war. This is the true internationalism; the internationalism of friendly contest with rivalry *minus* blood. God preserve me from any other sort of internationalism, particularly from that tasteless, spiceless, flabby, hodge-podge that would *merge* me with a Zulu and would reduce all distinctive flavor till you couldn't tell a Yankee from a Hottentot.

Bakunin's conception of internationalism has come to revolutionize the old. Bakunin would destroy government and civilization itself in order that a new condition of society might spring up on their ruins. In short, Bakunin is the political father of Mr. August Spies. Chaos, according to Mr. Spies, must be had recourse to before anything desirable can be obtained. All that modern civilization has taught us, all we hold most dear,—religion, science, family, marriage, and our laws,—must be destroyed in order that a return should be had to primitive simplicity as a basis for a new beginning. Rousseau had, indeed, the same idea, only it was confined to theory, and uttered rather as a lament than as an argument. “Science, art, and literature, are they not the agents of demoralization?” he asks, and what is “civilization but the source of all evils?” “In that case,” replied Voltaire, “we must return to the woods and go down on all fours.” This is exactly what Bakunin would have us do.

But suppose we did go back to the primitive simplicity of all fours, would our condition be improved? Primitive simplicity, by doing away with wealth, certainly diminishes inequality between

the rich and the poor, but leaves a harsher form of inequality, *i.e.*, that between the weak and the strong. In early times, in the sweet simplicity of primitive society, the weaker were not only driven to the wall, were not only made slaves of by the stronger, but were also, what is worse, very frequently *eaten*.

If Bakunin had really lived in the times he deems so perfect, unless he had been possessed of a stout arm, he would simply have been clubbed on the head by some brawnier savage, and served up for lunch. In primitive, or at least in barbaric society, the lines of caste are strictly drawn. There are cup-bearers, fly-catchers and ticklers, umbrella carriers, and any one familiar with Polynesian history will remember the *Kahili*-porters that walked before the chief. Instead of courtiers, these are slaves; and to have a combination of strength and cunning is to be king. Indeed, the very word king is derived from "can." Unless the anarchist were king, he would have no liberty at all. For a word against the ruler he would suffer the extreme penalty of the law. And to that very civilization which he would destroy, he owes his immunity in vapping as he does.

I once heard of a gentleman who had gained quite a reputation as a chess player by accidentally kicking the table when he found himself getting worsted, hoping that the next game would go more in his favor. This is the exact position of the anarchist as regards his desire to kick. But how, in the name of all the seven wonders, is he going to kick over the wide and strong table on which our civilization reposes? We are not all pawns, nor are the supports on which we rely fragile or of wood. Blowing up a few policemen in Chicago, or even the carriage in which a Czar drives, won't destroy civilization.

Bakunin, in his Revolutionary Catechism, says the "revolutionist is a man under a vow; he must be entirely absorbed in one single interest, one single thought, one single passion—destruction of society." That is all very well as far as it goes, but to succeed in destroying society you must have a vast organization—an organization compared with which your anarchist societies are as naught. Trained armies must be employed, equipped, and thoroughly disciplined. Would it not be hard to maintain this discipline when the object that called these armies into being was to destroy discipline? Every country all over the world would have to be thoroughly overrun and subjugated by these bands, even to

those as inaccessible as Abyssinia ; otherwise a new phase of the old civilization might radiate therefrom. Who would command these expeditions ? How would they be fed, not so much during the devastation as afterwards, when all was destroyed ? Not only houses, cathedrals, monuments, but knowledge also, would have to be extirpated. The knowledge of how to make machinery, that competitor, that rival of human labor ; the knowledge of how to make arms and gunpowder, that, at present, keep labor in subjugation ; the knowledge of how to run printing presses, that now lyingly teach men that whatever now is at least is necessary if not morally right. All this must be destroyed, with every evidence that it once existed. Indeed, Bakunin loudly declaims against all information. “Give no thought to this useless knowledge, in the name of which men try to tie your hands,” he says in his “*Paroles adressées aux étudiants*.” Again, “Ignorance is holy and wholesome,” “The student must leave the schools.” Granted this knowledge were destroyed ; however, memories of this knowledge would exist. Indeed, memories are germs that lie hid for generations to burst on the most unexpected occasion into life. With dead men alone would memories be safe ? Therefore, to make a thorough extirpation we must destroy the workers themselves in all these various branches, and further submit to a long interregnum of chaos in order to allow time to bury in oblivion the memories of any chance survivor, and so to prevent his communicating to any one else the secrets of a tyrannical past.

But suppose that one of those distant communities should have refused to permit everything within its boundaries destroyed—some powerful, pig-headed, pig-tailed nation like the Chinese, for instance, that could rally some 350,000,000 people to its defense ? France withstood the power of combined Europe in the last great revolution. Why might not China beat off all the hordes of anarchy in this second revolution ? Then this nation, waiting till you had reduced yourselves through anarchy to the primitive conditions which you had craved, till you were luxuriating, as it were, in the sweet simplicity of ignorance, this nation, pig-tailed and pig-headed as they are, naturally resenting, as pig-headed people will, the good that you had intended doing them, would swoop down upon you. Having relaxed into barbarism, being metaphorically on “all fours,” you would be unable to resist them ;

and having voluntarily destroyed even the recollection of gunpowder, you would probably scamper off at the first discharge of their artillery on all fours into the woods. They would, however, in all likelihood, capture you and lead you off to be sold, your sons into slavery, your daughters into harems, and yourself to some enterprising showman, who would probably exhibit you for the poor old fool that you were.

Such is the whole course of history ; the weaker nation goes to the wall, aboriginal peoples give place to others a little more advanced, and if civilization were destroyed your condition would infallibly be worse than it is at present. But allow me to reassure society ; allow me to raise it from the depths of despair into which the horrors I have drawn will probably have plunged it. Society is not to be destroyed. It is not possible to destroy it, and its grand onward sweep will be no more affected by Bakunin and his company of anarchists than the waters of the Mississippi by a chorus of hysterical frogs croaking on the bank.

LLOYD S. BRYCE.